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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 28 October 1992 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit the text of a statement by the Government of the Russian Federation, dated 22 October 1992, regarding human rights violations in the Estonian Republic and to request that you arrange for its circulation as an official document at the forthcoming forty-ninth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(Signed): E. Makeev
Ambassador

Statement of the Government of the Russian Federation, dated 22 October 1992, regarding human rights violations in the Estonian Republic

Numerous cases of serious human rights violations in Estonia are causing profound concern and alarm within the leadership of the Russian Federation. The most recent such case, unprecedented as regards its character and scale, was the 20 September presidential and parliamentary elections in the Estonian Republic. Non-indigenous inhabitants of Estonia, accounting for more than 40 per cent of the population, were precluded from taking part in those elections and thereby arbitrarily deprived of the possibility of becoming full citizens of their country, in which they are permanently resident. As a result of the elections, ethnic Russians have been deprived of any significant representation in Parliament. They have been excluded from political activities and, consequently, their social and economic rights have been infringed. There can be no doubt that this reflects nothing but the consistent implementation by the Estonian authorities of an official policy of excluding inhabitants not belonging to the indigenous nationality from Estonia's political, economic and cultural life. Such discriminatory practices run counter to the basic obligations assumed by the Estonian Republic under various multilateral documents of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Agreement on principles governing inter-State relations between Russia and Estonia. There is every reason to fear that a further escalation may lead to an acute inter-nationality conflict in Estonia.

The Government of the Russian Federation, using diplomatic channels and other possibilities, has repeatedly drawn the attention of the Estonian side to the inadmissibility of such a policy and of such practices, and has warned it that relations between the Russian Federation and Estonia could become seriously strained. Unfortunately, these approaches and appeals have so far produced no practical results.

Accordingly, pursuant to a decision taken by the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation on 17 July 1992, the Government intends to take a number of steps - in addition to what has already been done - to protect the interests and rights of ethnic Russians living in Estonia. Specifically, the positions adopted by the Russian Federation in inter-State talks with the Estonian Republic and our commitments under bilateral economic agreements will be adjusted in the light of developments.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation has been instructed to continue making active use of CSCE's human dimension mechanism and of the possibilities offered by other international bodies with a view to protecting human rights in Estonia.

In confirming its readiness to engage in a constructive dialogue with Estonia on all aspects of relations between the two countries, the Government of the Russian Federation expresses the hope that the new leadership of the Estonian Republic will be realistic and be able to safeguard human rights in Estonia.